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THE PROGRESS OF WOMEN IN MODERN GREECE*

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New York

[Dr. Achilles Rose is known as an ardent Phil-Hellene who has made interesting and valuable contributions to the study of Greek life and civilization. While a profound admirer of ancient Greek literature, he is deeply interested in the development of modern Greece, its life, language, and institutions. His book, "Christian Greece, Living Greek," has won many commendations from reviewers. In this article he speaks with personal and professional authority.—S. J. B.]

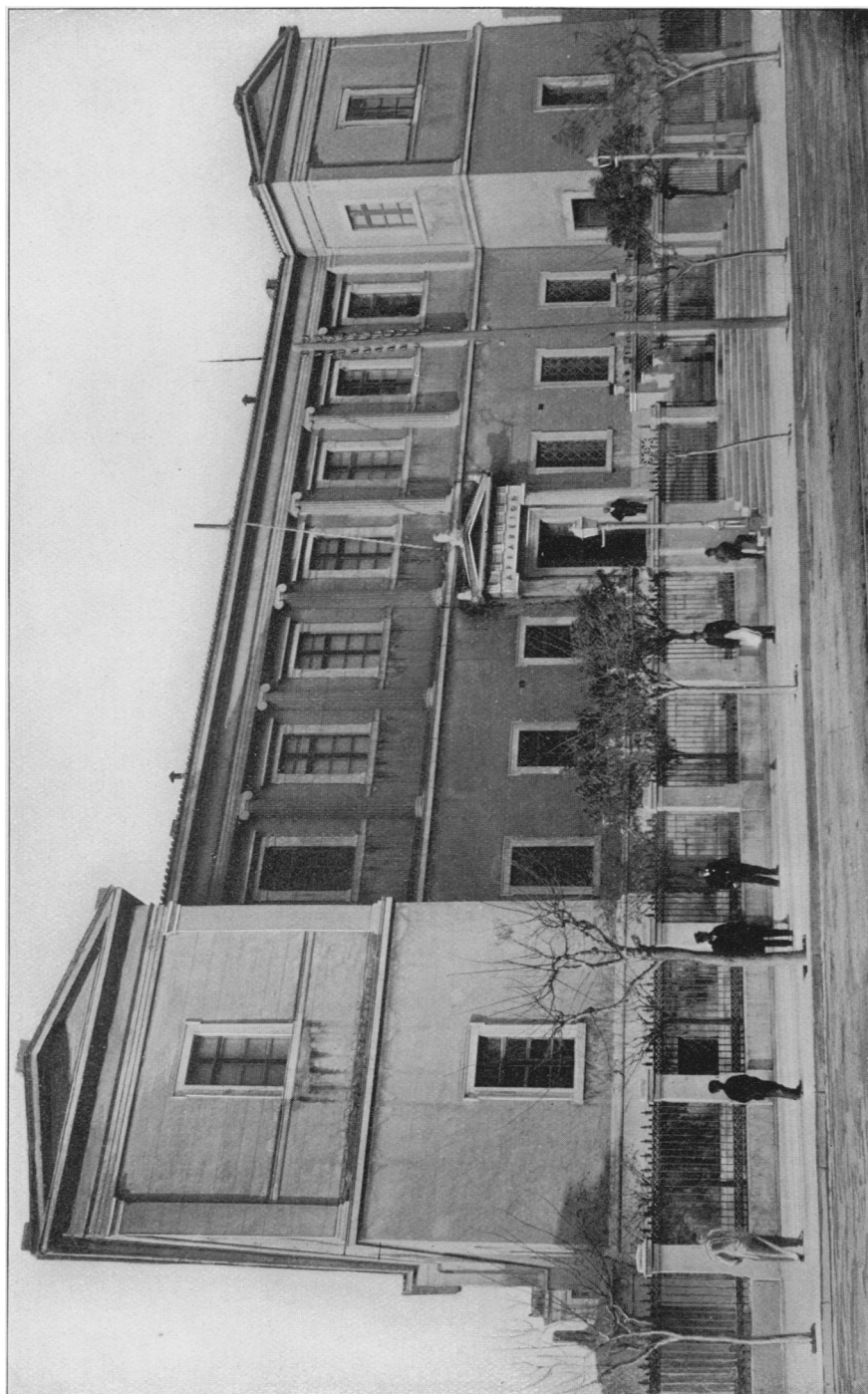
KALOS, in Greek, was once the word for beautiful; but since the ancient Greeks thought that everything beautiful was good, this word, kalos, became a synonym for beautiful and good.

In the sense that beautiful and good are one and the same, the greatest philosopher of modern times, Emmanuel Kant, has spoken of woman as the representative of beauty; and in this sense I shall speak of the women of Greece of to-day as the ideals of beauty.

It was a brilliant, a joyful day when, in the year 1886, the Arsakeion of Athens celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of its existence. It was a feast worthy of the Hellenic nation, the most memorable since Greece had regained her independence, a feast which reminded the present generation of the noble spirit and the virtue of their ancestors of recent time.

When a part—a part only—of Greece had regained freedom, after having suffered for almost four hundred years in Turkish slavery, one

* Lecture delivered April 18, 1901, before the Alumnae Association of the New York Training-School for Nurses attached to Bellevue Hospital, New York.



THE ARSAकेION

of the first things to which the people devoted their attention was public instruction.

John Kokonis, a prominent pedagogue, held the opinion that the state of civilization, and the power of a nation before all, were dependent on the influence of the mothers upon their children, because the children received their first education from the mother, and because the influence of mothers in society produced great and good results; further, he held that the position of woman was one of the most important indications by which the national character and the state of civilization of a people could be judged. For these reasons Kokonis proclaimed that in Greece, where higher schools for boys had already been established, higher schools for girls were needed immediately, because it would be unjust to deny to women the same standard of education which was accorded to men.

The income of the Greek government at that time was so small that funds for such schools could not be expected from this quarter.

The little Greek nation had made tremendous sacrifices during a war of seven years, had fought until her land had been devastated and her race decimated. The sword, famine, and disease had reduced the population to about one-third of its original number, and this third to a state of most complete destitution. There has been no war in modern times in which an equal loss of property and life has been sustained by any people, who, despite this suffering, have remained unsubdued. From 1825 to 1832 Greece was deprived of all internal revenue. Her commerce was completely annihilated. Even with the immense supplies which Greece received from the Philhellenic Committees of Europe and America, the revolution seemed not infrequently to be in danger of collapse from actual starvation of the whole population. All agricultural stock was extirpated; houses, barns, and stables were destroyed; fruit-trees and vineyards rooted up.

It was shortly after this cruel war had ended that, at the instigation of Kokonis, there came together in Athens, on July 25, 1836, seventy-two men, whose purpose was to found an institution in which girls should be educated to teach in schools throughout Greece, even in the out-of-the-way villages.

The money to execute this plan was raised by public subscription. The appeal, directed to the love of the Greeks for knowledge, was received with joy alike in the palace of the king, the houses of the rich, the cell of the monk, and the hut of the peasant,—indeed, by all Greeks; those in the liberated fatherland, those who still suffered in Turkish bondage, the Greeks living in foreign lands—all gave according to their ability.

The constitution of this Educational Society, as it was called at



OLGA, QUEEN OF THE HELLENES

first, forms a bright page in the history of Greece, and has proved a blessing not only for the little Greek kingdom, but wherever Greek hearts are beating, wherever the Greek language is spoken.

What success the Educational Society has had can be seen from the words of a French writer, published about twenty years ago: "There no more exists a mountain without a valley than a Greek village without a school."

In the first school year, the year 1837, the society commenced its work with a capital of five thousand drachmas;* in the year 1886 it had a budget of three hundred thousand drachmas. During the first school year the number of pupils, boarding and day scholars together, was seventy; in the year 1886 it had risen to two thousand.

For the first three years a house was rented, every succeeding year a larger one; and when, after the third year, there was no house in Athens large enough to accommodate the now much increased number of pupils, the erection of a school building was decided upon.

The society kept on building so long as the means lasted. The timber was presented by Greeks in Roumania, and a ship of the Greek government brought it to Athens. When the funds were exhausted and the society had to discontinue the work of erecting the school-house there appeared on the scene a man who provided the means to finish the house. This man was a physician and a philanthropist. His name was Apostolis Arsakis, and he was of Epirus, a part of Greece which to the present day is suffering under Turkish bondage.

The idea promulgated by Kokonis, that the education of woman is essential for the development and the happiness of a nation, found an echo in his soul. He gave two hundred and fifty thousand drachmas to finish the school-house, and paid back to the Educational Society all the money it had already expended on the building, namely, one hundred thousand drachmas. Thus he alone paid for the whole structure. Then he deposited two hundred thousand drachmas in the National Bank of Greece, with the condition that the interest of this capital should be applied towards maintaining the school.

When the house was finished the Educational Society decided that the institution should for all time bear the name of Arsakis, and the word *Arsakeion* was written in golden letters on a white marble tablet placed over the large entrance—as you see it on the picture. He also gave funds for a school for girls in Epirus, a school to be under the control of the *Arsakeion*.

Not only Arsakis, but many others, have contributed to enrich the institution. The names of those who have given most generously are

* A drachma is about twenty cents.

written on marble columns which stand in the large hall of the entrance. Here we read the name of the philanthropic Helene Tositza, who provided for a department of the school which bears her name; of the illustrious Pana, who provided for a department for the small children, a department which corresponds with our kindergarten; of the noble Lady Sina; here we find also the names of Philhellenes,—Canning, Eynard, and the Duke of Montpensier.

During the first fifty years of its existence more than two thousand teachers have received their diplomas in the Arsakeion, and they have taught and teach in every city and every village of Greece, and in many places in the Orient where Greeks are living, as well as in French and in English cities.

Each time that I go to Athens, and every day while I am there, I find something that is noble and beautiful of which none of the visitors before me has written. I have spent hours in our Astor Library examining the magazines, but in none have I found the Arsakeion mentioned.

Now I shall speak of another institution which I am certain will excite your interest not less than the Arsakeion, and whoever of you may have the good fortune to see Athens will be prepared by this modest description to visit the Evangelismos.

Until the year 1884 Athens had only one hospital, namely, the Municipal Hospital, called Elpis (Hope). In the year 1872 there was organized, under the inspiration and protection of Her Majesty the Queen, the Gynaikias Paideuseos Syllogos, which is a society for the improvement of the education of women. The Ergastirion of this society is the great workshop for artistic handwork. Over four hundred industrious women find steady occupation here. It is not a factory owned by some mercantile firm, but the workshop of the society, founded and sustained in the interest and for the benefit of Greek women of the working class. Silk fabrics are woven there that surpass the best French work; some of them, interwoven with gold thread, are finer than can be found anywhere else. There are head-dresses, veils, and bridal garments so fine that several yards of them can be placed in a nutshell. The women work in airy and bright rooms with high ceilings, the windows open, and the workers are not under the control of a foreman, but work under the instruction and guidance of motherly friends, aristocratic ladies of Athens. All is handwork, nothing machine-made. Here we have original Oriental patterns in carpets, and these carpets are superior to any carpets made in America; they are taken to the river at Easter-time and washed in the water without injury to the color. There are undergarments, solid, durable, and artistic. The aristocratic families in Athens have found how much more beautiful the Greek work is than that bought

in Paris, and it has become fashionable among ladies of the higher circles to have their trousseaux made in the Ergastirion of the Society for Education of Women in Athens, instead of ordering them, as was done formerly, from Paris.

This Ergastirion is the centre for women's work throughout Greece. Gold embroideries on silk and velvet, such as are made in Eubœa, in Epirus, and in some of the islands of the Ægean Sea, and sent to the Ergastirion in Athens, are products of a taste that has been evolved and transmitted through centuries; their equals cannot be found in any Parisian shop. From the Ergastirion in Athens the peasant women in the provinces are supplied with artistic patterns, their taste is educated and its purity maintained, and of all kinds and on many subjects advice is given by the ladies of Athens to the women in the country who work for the Ergastirion.

Among the objects of this society from its start has been that of elevating the status of women nurses to one of dignity, which previously had not been accorded the profession. Nursing the sick as an occupation was practised by women of the humblest classes, and the status of such women was considered no higher than that of washerwomen or women going out to do house-cleaning; there existed at that time among the ordinary people no idea that nursing the sick was a noble vocation, worthy of well-educated, well-trained women.

In the year 1875 the Queen requested Dr. Nicolas G. Makkas to write a text-book for the instruction of nurses. This book of one hundred and seventy-six pages was published in the same year. The first chapter treats of the virtues and the utility of nurses. In the year 1876 the Queen appointed a committee of distinguished men, presided over by the Metropolitan of Athens, to collect money for the erection of a hospital. This committee succeeded in securing the necessary funds, and in the year 1881 the foundation of the new hospital, to be named Evangelismos, was laid, and in the year 1884 the building was dedicated. To give an account of the contributions made by philanthropic citizens of Athens, of Greeks living in foreign lands, and of English and Russian Philhellenes would fill pages, because, as everyone has given generously, according to his means, justice would require that I should enumerate a great many, not only those who gave a million, or even millions, but also the great number of those who subscribed five thousand or ten thousand drachmas. The same may be said of prominent Athenian ladies who are aiding in this work of charity. I saw a committee of these ladies who devote time and labor to the Evangelismos, presided over by Madame Sungros, while in session. One wing of the magnificent building bears the name Sungros, another the name Theodoridis. These wings were

named after the two great philanthropists who paid the entire cost of their erection.

It is to some extent due to the warm interest and the personal devotion of the Queen to this hospital that the contributions from the beginning came in so richly and continued to flow all the time, but the truth is that there exists no place on earth, no city in the world, which is, in proportion to its size, so generous as Athens in the matter of philanthropy. The Athenians have quite a number of men who may well be compared with our own Peter Cooper, men who gave their millions, not as legacies, but while alive.

In the first year (1884--5) the number of sick treated was three hundred and one. In the year ending March, 1900, the number was nineteen hundred and ninety-nine. Of these twelve hundred and ninety were medical and seven hundred and nine surgical cases. The expense in this last year was two hundred and thirty-two thousand three hundred and thirty-three drachmas. The last report records a legacy of Andrew D. Sungros of two million drachmas.

In speaking of the site it is impossible to exaggerate, for the Evangelismos is the most wholesome, the most beautifully situated hospital in the world. It stands on high ground, with a magnificent view upon a scene dominated by the picturesque Agios Georgios. There is a current of air from the mountains of the north which secures freshness even at noon during the summer-time. These breezes from the north, which were much prized by the ancient Greeks, are most salubrious for Athens. It is on account of this fresh mountain air, modified sometimes by sea-breezes, that the Americans and the English have selected the places for their archæological schools in the neighborhood of the Evangelismos. It is well known that on account of the purity of the air in Greece, especially in Athens, septic diseases are of extremely rare occurrence. The hospital is so well regulated that even patients of the higher class come to it for treatment.

As has been mentioned already, it is the Queen who inspired and still inspires and protects the work; but, unlike instances of this kind, in which patronage by a high personage means not much more than giving the name, receiving reports, and contributing money, we have here an example of devotion without equal. The interest which the Queen takes in the welfare of the hospital is admirable indeed. While in Athens she takes personal notice of most minute details, visits the hospital daily, goes to a bedside to console the suffering sick like an angel, and is alike kind to the better educated and the most humble. It has happened that the Queen herself has procured and brought articles of different descriptions that patients had been longing for.



A GREEK LADY

It is well known that the Queen, unlike some other crowned women of Europe, never enters into politics, but devotes her life exclusively to her family and to works of charity. Her charitable interest, however, is not confined to the noble institutions for the improvement of the condition of women of the working-class and the Evangelismos, in which two institutions she is the ever-active, the leading spirit, controlling the very details, so that nothing is done without her knowledge and approval; she is even known to visit incognito the sick poor in the city of Athens.

The two physicians who took charge of the two departments, Dr. Makkas, of the internal, and Dr. Galvani, of the surgical, when the hospital was opened have been and are still the heads of these departments, are still the physicians in charge of the Evangelismos.

It is difficult to understand why communications from visitors to Greece are as a rule unfavorable to this unfortunate country. If it is true, if you agree with the idea that the position of woman is one of the most important signs of the character of a nation and of its civilization, you must surely confess that the Greeks merit our esteem in a marvellous degree.

Once I had the honor to address a select American society on my friends the Greeks. Among the audience were a number of professors of the Columbia University of this city, and one of them who had lived for a long time in Greece said in the course of the discussion, "There exists no people among whom woman is more highly esteemed than the Greeks of to-day, and this fact alone augurs for the nation a happy future."

THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF NURSES

A MESSAGE FROM ITS PRESIDENT

THE INSPIRATION

A WELL-DEVELOPED sense of corporate responsibility in individuals is the only sure foundation on which to build the liberties of peoples. Failure on the part of powers to cultivate the sacred sense of human responsibility has resulted in the enslavement of persons and in the degradation of nations. Hence honor, the height, the flower, the cornerstone of morality, must be the inspiration of individual conduct and the fount from which true greatness springs. The people must have knowledge to make them strong and worthy of power, and to make a human